

Fall 8-15-2001

ENG 4775-001: Studies in Literary Criticism: Critical Race Theories and American Literatures

Tim Engles
Eastern Illinois University

Follow this and additional works at: http://thekeep.eiu.edu/english_syllabi_fall2001



Part of the [English Language and Literature Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Engles, Tim, "ENG 4775-001: Studies in Literary Criticism: Critical Race Theories and American Literatures" (2001). *Fall 2001*. 123.
http://thekeep.eiu.edu/english_syllabi_fall2001/123

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the 2001 at The Keep. It has been accepted for inclusion in Fall 2001 by an authorized administrator of The Keep. For more information, please contact tabruns@eiu.edu.

Studies in Literary Criticism:
Critical Race Theories and American Literatures
 English 4775—Fall, 2001

Instructor: Tim Engles
 Phone: 581-6316 (it's often easier to reach me by e-mail: cftde@eiu.edu)
 Office hours (Coleman 3831): MWF, 11:00 to 12:00, and by appointment
 Course listserv: 4775fall@eiu.edu

Course Description:

We'll begin with consideration of the concept of "race" itself, followed by readings of literature, and of recent theoretical approaches to the impact the social fiction of "race" has had on American authors and their works. In the last two decades in particular, authors and scholars have intensively pursued questions that we will address as we study literature, theory, and criticism: how has the 300 year-old fiction of race gained such social significance? does race matter for "white" authors, characters, and people as much as it apparently does for those "of color"? what are proponents of such movements as "multiculturalism," "diversity awareness," and "whiteness studies" trying to accomplish? what were "the culture wars"? have recent calls for Americans to "move beyond race" been heard by literary authors and scholars? How does race intersect with other factors, such as gender, class, sexuality, and religion?

We will address these questions by using critical and theoretical texts as aids to interpreting literary texts—and vice versa. Students will emerge from this course with a solid grounding in established and recent modes of scholarly inquiry into the intersections of race, literature, and culture. The course will be organized as a conversation on these matters, with your daily participation central to our work. (Therefore, the rule regarding attendance is: be here. If you have more than four absences this semester, your course grade will drop a full letter grade for each absence beyond four.)

Required Texts:

Rebecca Harding Davis, *Life in the Iron Mills* (Bedford Cultural Edition)
 Tom Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*
 Langston Hughes, *The Ways of White Folks*
 Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*
 Chang-rae Lee, *Native Speaker*
 AND: a course packet (available at Copy Express in the student union)

Course Requirements:

1. Written responses and oral presentations: Each seminar member will choose two of the non-literary essays or chapters we will be reading and discussing—one before midterm and one after. For each article, you will write a one-page, single-spaced response/review of the article. This written response will be duplicated and handed out to each of us on the day of your presentation, and it will function as your guidelines for leading class discussion of the piece for a significant portion of the session. Suggestions: focus attention on a problem or set of problems, and the writer's apparent solution(s); make connections, within the text, and/or with others; zero in on a significant or surprising aspect of the text; the written response should end with at least one question whose answer is, as you see it, a key to understanding the writer's argument. Don't plan on talking by yourself for long—your primary goal is to stimulate discussion. After the discussion of the essay or chapter, you will then revise your response (into something no more than two pages, single spaced) on the basis of your reaction to how class discussion changed (or verified) your response. This revision will be due one week after the in-class presentation. (30%)
2. 5-7 page critical essay: This paper will focus on two of the non-literary writers and their articles listed on the first half of our syllabus. It will concentrate on points of contact, convergence, and divergence in their arguments, and like the longer essay, it will follow traditional conventions for academic essays (e.g., unity, coherence, proper formatting and MLA-style documentation, and so on). You are free to connect their insights to works of literature (either on or off our syllabus) or to other "cultural products," or you can focus on the arguments themselves. You are also encouraged (but no, not required) to read, consider, and perhaps incorporate other work by either or both of these writers. Because this essay is due right after midterm, you can think of it as a kind of take-home midterm, assigned *very* early. (20%)
3. 10-15+ pages research essay: This paper will focus on one of the literary or cinematic texts on our syllabus, or another of your choosing, with my prior approval. The topic is open, as long as it relates directly to some of our readings and discussions, and a 250-400 word proposal will be required beforehand. The paper must reflect your close attention to and understanding of insights and interpretive concepts that will have arisen throughout the semester. (25%)
4. A final, take-home exam (15%)
5. Active, thoughtful class participation: I will not deliver lectures in this class; because we will proceed in a seminar format, we must contribute together to a positive, challenging, interesting learning environment. Doing so will call for your careful concentration before class on each assigned reading, and your willingness to share your thoughts, questions, and feelings with others about what you read and hear. (10%)

Other Matters:

E-mail activity: Enrollment in this class requires an e-mail account, and you must check it frequently for messages pertaining to the course. E-mail is the quickest, easiest way to reach me if I am not in my office; I welcome any and all questions and comments. Using e-mail is crucial for this course—if you do not send me an e-mail message (write to cftde@eiu.edu) by Friday, August 24 at 3:00 p.m., I will assume that you have chosen against fully participating in the course, and I will therefore drop you. In your message, 1) describe yourself in whatever way you choose, including your career aspirations, and 2) write a statement to the effect that you have read and agree with these course policies and requirements.

Academic honesty: I expect you to act honestly and do your own work in this class, and so does Eastern Illinois University. It is your responsibility (once again) to familiarize yourself with the English Department's policy on plagiarism: "Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism—'The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one's original work' (Random House Dictionary of the English Language)—has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignment of a grade of F for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office."

A bit more about essays: **All** writing assignments are due at the beginning of the class period on the day they are due, whether the student is in class or not. Late-paper penalty: fifteen points each day late. When each of the two essays is turned in, it **MUST** be accompanied in a manila folder by all notes and drafts written towards it, with the final copy of the essay on top of this material. I will use these materials to gauge and offer comments on your writing process. I **WILL NOT GRADE** an essay that is not accompanied by material that clearly demonstrates several earlier stages leading up to the final draft, so be sure to save all such materials (if you do most or all of your writing on a computer, print out occasional drafts to include with your final copy). Essays unaccompanied by materials that clearly demonstrate several stages of development toward the final copy will receive an automatic ZERO.

ENGLISH 4775: DAILY SCHEDULE
(this schedule may be subject to change)

M AUG 20 Introduction to the course

- Excerpt from Kimberlé Crenshaw, Neil Gotanda, Gary Peller, Kendall Thomas (eds.), "Introduction" (from *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings that Formed the Movement*. 1995)
- Ethan Bronner, "Inventing the Notion of Race" (from *The New York Times*. 1998)

W AUG 22 Michael Omi and Howard Winant, "Racial Formation" (from *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*. 1986, 1994)

F AUG 24 Henry Louis Gates, Jr. "Editor's Introduction: Writing 'Race' and the Difference It Makes" (from "*Race, Writing, and Difference*. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., ed. 1986)

M AUG 27 Evelyn Hu-DeHart, "PC and the Politics of Multiculturalism in Higher Education" (from *Race*, Steven Gregory and Roger Sanjek, eds. 1994)

W AUG 29 Mary White Rowlandson, Excerpt from "A Narrative of the Captivity and Restauration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson" (1682)

F AUG 31 Continue Rowlandson

M SEP 3 LABOR DAY– NO CLASSES

W SEP 5 Valerie Babb, "Crafting Whiteness in Early America" (from *Whiteness Visible: The Meaning of Whiteness in American Literature and Culture*. 1998)

F SEP 7 bell hooks, "Artistic Integrity: Race and Accountability" (from *Reel to Real: Race, Sex, and Class at the Movies*. 1996)

M SEP 10 poems by Phyllis Wheatley (1773)

W SEP 12 Timothy B. Powell, "Theorizing Ruthless Democracy" (from *Ruthless Democracy: A Multicultural Interpretation of the American Renaissance*. 2000)

F SEP 14 Rebecca Harding Davis, "Life in the Iron Mills" (1860), 39-53

M SEP 17 "Life in the Iron Mills," 53-74

W SEP 19 Sui Sin Far, "In the Land of the Free," and "Its Wavering Image" (from *Mrs. Spring Fragrance* (1912)

- F SEP 21 Amy Ling, "Creating One's Self: The Eaton Sisters" (from *Reading the Literatures of Asian America*. 1992)
- M SEP 24 Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (1992), "Preface," and "Black Matters"
- W SEP 26 *Playing in the Dark*, "Romancing the Shadow"
- F SEP 28 Three Hemingway stories in course packet: "Indian Camp," "The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife," and "The Battler" (from *In Our Time*. 1925)
- M OCT 1 Shelly Fisher Fishkin, "Interrogating 'Whiteness,' Complicating 'Blackness': Remapping American Culture" (from *American Quarterly*, 1995)
- W OCT 3 Eric Lott, "The New Cosmopolitanism" (from *Transition: An International Review*, 1996)
- F OCT 5 FALL BREAK– NO CLASSES
- M OCT 8 W. E. B. Du Bois, "The Souls of White Folk" (from *Darkwater*, 1920)
- W OCT 10 (Mid-term: last day to drop course with no grade) Langston Hughes, *The Ways of White Folks* (1934) 3-55
- F OCT 12 *The Ways of White Folks* 57-123
- M OCT 15 *The Ways of White Folks* 125-197
- W OCT 17 *The Ways of White Folks*, 199-255
- [Late Wed. or Thurs.: screening of *Salt of the Earth* (directed by Herbert J. Biberman, 1954; 94 minutes) in Coleman Hall]
- F OCT 19 (last day to withdraw with a W) Discussion of *Salt of the Earth*
- M OCT 22 (WP/WF course withdrawal begins) Richard Wright, "The Ethics of Living Jim Crow" (1937)
Paper one due at the beginning of class
- W OCT 24 Flannery O'Connor, "The Artificial Nigger" (1955)
- F OCT 26 Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987), "Preface" and 1-23
- M OCT 29 *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 25-64

W OCT 31 *Borderlands/La Fronterra*, 65-91

F NOV 2 Reviews by Aranda, Kruckmeyer, and Tinnemeyer of José David Salvidar's
Border Matters: Remapping American Cultural Studies (1997)
Proposal for final paper due at the beginning of class

M NOV 5 Ross Chambers, "The Unexamined" (from *Whiteness: A Critical Reader*. Mike Hill, ed., 1997)

W NOV 14 Chang-rae Lee, *Native Speaker* (1995), 1-59

F NOV 16 No Class—Conferences on final essay rough draft

M NOV 19 to F NOV 23 THANKSGIVING RECESS

M NOV 26 *Native Speaker*, 60-130

W NOV 28 *Native Speaker*, 131-71

F NOV 30 *Native Speaker*, 172-230

M DEC 3 *Native Speaker*, 231-92

W DEC 5 *Native Speaker*, 293-349

F DEC 7 Last day of class; final paper due at the beginning of class, take-home final exam handed out

Take-home final must be slid under Dr. Engles' office door (Coleman 3831) by the end of the scheduled exam period for this course.